MAYURA

NEWSLETTER OF THE BIRD-WATCHERS' SOCIETY OF A.P.

AASHEESH PITTIE.
14-7-370, BEGUM BAZAR
HYDERABAD-500 012.

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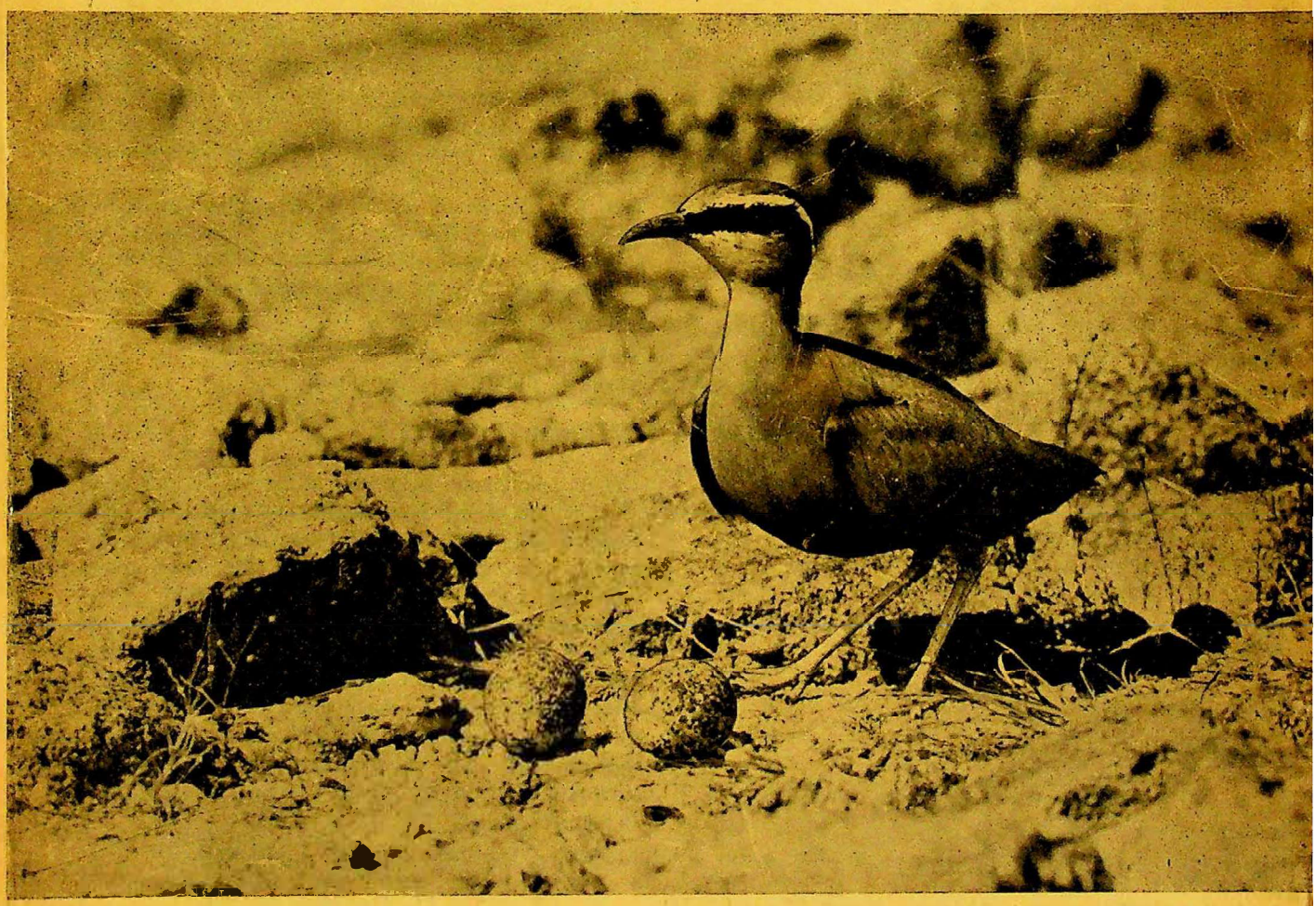

HELP CONSERVE WILDLIFE

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BIRD SANCTUARIES OF ANDHRA PRADESH

KOLLERU SANCTUARY

Location :	The Bird Sanctuary is located in West Godavari District.
Area :	673 Sq. Kms. (Depending on the water spread)
Habitat :	It is a marsh with shallow water spread.
Birds Found :	Large number of Garganey Teals, Common Teals, Pochards, Spotbills, Brahminy Ducks, Openbill Storks Herons, occasionally Flamingoes. Grey Pelicans which used to visit this area have become rarer due to various causes.
Season :	October to March.
Accessibility :	The Sanctuary can be approached by road from Eluru, the District Headquarters (on N. H. 7) which is just 10 Kms. away. In the Sanctuary area small dinghies or dugouts can be used for approaching birds.
Airport :	Vijayawada — 70 Kms.
Accomodation :	P. W. D. Rest House in Eluru, the District Headquarters.

PULICAT SANCTUARY

Location :	60 Kms. north of Madras City on N. H. 5
Area :	500 Sq. Kms.
Habitat :	A vast coastal shallow brackish lake along the east coast of the Bay of Bengal. The backwaters of the sea attracts a large number of migratory water birds.
Birds Found :	Large congregation of Flamingoes, Grey, Pelicans, Ducks, Teals, Storks, Terns, Herons, Gulls and a number of waders.
Accessibility :	The Bird Sanctuary can be approached by road from Nellore on the G. T. road (NH. 5). The nearest railway station is Sulurpet. Madras City is about 60 Kms. from the Sanctuary to the south by road & rail.
Season :	October to March
Airport :	Madras — 60 Kms., Tirupati — 90 Kms.
Accomodation :	Travellers Bungalow at Sulurpet.

NELAPATTU SANCTUARY

Location :	The Bird Sanctuary is located on the East Coast, about 20 Kms. north of Pulicat Bird Sanctuary in Nellore District.
Habitat :	A small fresh water irrigation tank in the village of Nelapattu, with Barringtonia trees in the water spread on which the water birds nest.
Birds Found :	Grey Pelicans are found nesting on the Barringtonia trees in the tank bed. Other nesting birds include Cormorants, White Ibis, Night Heron, Openbill Storks etc. The villagers offer full protection to these birds.
Accessibility :	The Sanctuary is approachable from the Madras-Vijayawada Highway (NH. 5). Also by rail from Doravarichatram railway station on the Nellore—Madras line. (1 Km.)
Season :	October to March
Airport :	Madras — 100 Kms., Tirupati — 120 Kms.

For further details contact : Divisional Forest Officer (WLM) at the respective District Headquarters

OR

The Chief Wildlife Warden
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NEWSLETTER OF THE BIRDSWATCHERS' SOCIETY OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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STATE BIRD OF ANDHRA PRADESH - SOME ALTERNATIVES.

By:- S Ashok Kumar, I.A.S., 10-3-283/5, Humayun Nagar, Hyderabad - 500028.

Andhra Pradesh has 64,189 sq. kms. of reserved forest and the percentage distribution of forest land to the total geographical area, as per 1980-1981 statistics, is 22.64, and it continues to be the same even now. These forests were once teeming with wildlife but with deforestation and consequential loss of habitat, the wildlife has been declining gradually. Hunting has also claimed its toll. The cumulative effect, over a period of years, is the total extinction of some species like the Jerdon's Courser (Cursorius bitorquatus) and pushing some species like the Great Indian Bustard (Choriotis nigriceps) etc., to the brink of extinction.

Our forests abound with a wide range of birds, big and small, dull coloured and brightly coloured. There are no specific guidelines or accepted principles as to whether the selection of a state bird should be made from (a) extinct species, (b) vanishing species or (c) existing species. Again, there are no fixed criteria for the specific selection. However, broadly speaking, the following perhaps, could be the parameters for making the choice.

1. Commonness
2. Widely known
3. Striking colours
4. Abundance
5. Peculiar distribution
6. Endemic or exclusiveness
7. Peculiar or special to a region

It may appear odd to look for tee State Bird from out of the species which are extinct. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to examine the claim of the Jerdon's Courser (Cursorius bitorquatus). This longlegged, sleek, ploter-like bird with conspecuous white bands across the chest was confined to the scrub jungle in the eastern ghats of our state. It was discovered for the first time by the noted taxonomist Jerdon in 1848 near Nellore. It was known in Godavari and Penner Valleys, Rayalaseema and Bhadrachalam. The last authentic record of the bird was in 1900 and it is listed in the Red Data Book of the IUCN. As it was found only in our state and nowhere else, it can be said that this bird is endemic and exclusive to our state and it has put our state on the ornithological map of India. Being truly 'Andhra', it is a serious contender but the total extinction of the bird is a point against it for, protection and preservation of this species is not possible.

Next we have to scan the list of vanishing species which are on the verge of extinction. The Great Indian Bustard (Choriotis nigriceps) immediately strikes our mind. About a century ago, the GIB was a common bird found in the plains of the Indian sub/continent. During the last decade, however, its numbers were reduced to 1260. It is declared endangered in the Red Data Book of the IUCN. This magnificent bird has been located in Medak, Kurnool, Mahaboobnagar, Anantapur and Hyderabad districts and necessary steps have been taken to protect and preserve their dwindling numbers. It has already been declared as the state bird of Rajasthan and hence it cannot claim the same honour in our state.

Out of the existing species of birds in our state, the selection of a state bird is rather ticklish. The range of birds which are common, known and numerous is rather wide - sparrows, crows, pigeons, doves, mynahs, bulbuls, bayas, munias, tree-pies, drongos, orioles, tailor-birds, wagtails, kingfishers, egrets, water-fowl, raptors, etc. These are found in almost all the other states. Mere commonness or numerical strength does not alone qualify for the status of a state bird. There is a galaxy of colourful birds in our state like the purple moorhen, green bee-eater, emerald dove, purplerumped sunbird, golden oriole, jerdon's chloropsis, goldrronted chloropsis, paradise flycatcher etc., which, however, do not conform to most, if not all the parameters.

The Little Spiderhunter (Arachnothera longirostris) and the European Tree Sparrow fall under the category of "peculiar distributuon" as they are found in the Himalayan and the Eastern Ghats only. But very little is known about them in our state.

By a process of elimination, the choice narrows down to the following claimants; 1) Blue Jay, 2) Grey Pelican, 3) Indian Pitta, 4) Brahminy Kite, 5) Common Kingfisher, 6) Goldenbacked Woodpecker and 7) Crimsonbreasted Barbet.

Being a bird of open country, Blue Jay or the Indian Roller (Coracias benghalensis) is one of the best known birds in our state. It is widely spread throughout the country and a familiar sight in cities, towns and villages. One never loses the thrill, especially when the bird is in flight, revealing the banded glory of its wings and tail. Perching on a telegraph post or an elevated and commanding point, it dives to the ground to capture insects like termites, grasshoppers and beetles, small lizards, mice and flies back to its perch for a meal. Since it destroys many injurious insects it is considered as the best friend of the farmer. Because of its commonness, familiarity, striking colours and being highly beneficial to the agriculturists, many advocate that it should be given the State Bird status. It is believed that Lord Shiva had assumed its form and hence it is called the 'Nilkant'.

The Grey Pelican (Pelecanus philippensis), squat and ponderous with its enormous beak and an elastic pouch is a familiar sight to many. Living exclusively on fish, it is found on all inland waters. In our state it was located in Kolleru Lake near Kolamur (W Godavari District) and Hamsaladeevi (Krishna District) and locally known as "Kolleti konga". The bird has since deserted the lake because of the gradual destruction of its habitat and the local people robbing the bird of its eggs. It is found in small numbers in Teli Neelapuram in Srikakulam district. A fairly vast breeding colony is found near Nelapattu in Nellore District. The Grey Pelican is also found in Point Calimere Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu. Though it is a known bird, it is neither endemic nor exclusive to our state.

The Indian Pitta (Pitta brachyura), a stoutly built bird with a short stumpy tail is mostly terrestrial and found throughout the length and breadth of the country. Its bright plumage is variegated with blue, green, black, white, fulvous and crimson

This beautiful bird feeds on grubs, beetles, ants and other insects and has thus become the friend of the farmer. Indian Pitta is a common and widely known bird for its gorgeous colours. It cannot be said that it is endemic to Andhra Pradesh but it is peculiar and special to our state since it bears the telugu name "Pitta". The world "pitta" is the latinisation of a telugu word meaning 'small bird'. In view of this signific/ance, this bird is a serious contender to the title of State Bird.

The Brahminy Kite (Haliastur indus) is a bird of wide distribution throughout our country. A bright chestnut bird of prey with black wing tips and a white head and breast, it is a familiar sight in cities, towns and villages. It feeds largely on refuse, carrion, crbbs, frogs, grasshoppers, chicken, small fish and snakes. It is revered by Hindus as Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu. It is called Brahminy Kite because of its association with Vishnu. Although common and widely known, it is not a colourful bird and it is neither peculiar nor special to our state.

A beautiful blue-black and orange-red breast make the Common Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis) one of the world's most colourful birds. It is a common and known bird, principally feeding on small fish, tadpoles, larvae and other aquatic insects. It is found widely through the country. However, it has no special significance for our state.

The Goldenbacked Woodpecker (Dinopium benghalense) is one of the best known birds and easily recognised by its loud call and black and white plumage with vivid crimson crest and brilliant golden back. This bird, climbing up the tree trunks or hopping from one tree to another, is a common sight in villages and towns. It is distributed throughout the country. It also qualifies for the status of State Bird since it is common well known and brightly coloured.

The Crimsonbreasted Barbet or Coppersmith (Megalaima haemacephala) is another attractive bird with brilliant colouration. More easily recognised by its hammering call than its form, it is found practically in the entire country. This bird is also one of the claimants to the status of State Bird on the ground of commonness, wide distribution and bright plumage.

Having examined the various claims, one feels that the balance of advantage is in favour of the Indian Pitta for, it conforms to most of the parameters like commonness, widely known, striking colours, abundance and peculiar and special to our region. It is because of this bird that the telugu word 'pitta' was latinised and has gone into worldwide circulation in the scientific field. It would therefore be appropriate to honour the Indian Pitta by conferring on it the status of State Bird.